Ground Breaking Ceremony Route 460 Bypass, Levee and Ring-Wall Construction (May 1, 2006)

Grundy, Virginia

I am pleased to return to Grundy this morning to break ground on the three final major elements of the Grundy Flood Control and Redevelopment Project. With today's ground breaking, the Virginia Department of Transportation will begin construction on the Route 460 Bypass in the Town of Grundy and the levee that the Bypass will be built upon, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will begin constructing the ring-wall along Slate Creek.

These projects will accomplished the dual purposes of providing a modern and efficient 4 lane highway around the Tow and providing the existing downtown business district with flood protection. In order to make the projects affordable, several years ago we devised an innovative arrangement through which it was agreed that flood protection along the Levisa River would be provided by building a levee upon which the Rt. 460 four lane would be placed. By merging the road and the levee we dramatically reduced the cost of both elements and enabled both the levee and the road to be built in an affordable manner.

One year ago, many of us here today gathered to dedicate the new vehicular access bridge from the existing downtown area to the redevelopment site. The completion by the Corps of Engineers of the access bridge was a milestone in creating the opportunity for commercial growth and development in Grundy. Currently, the Town of Grundy is working to provide the infrastructure necessary to develop on the new site, and, after many years of diligent work, commercial construction on the redevelopment site is set to begin this June.

The success of the redevelopment project will not be possible without the construction of the Route 460 Bypass in the Town of Grundy, for which we break ground today. The Virginia Department of Transportation will built a flood protection levee as the base for the Rt. 460 roadbed and widen and relocate a 0.7 mile stretch of Route 460 in the downtown business district extending from a location north of the existing intersection of Route 460 and Route 83 at a total cost of $24.2 million.

The successful redevelopment of the Town is also dependent upon the provision of adequate flood protection along Slate Creek. Today, the U.S. Army Corps of engineers will begin construction of a ring-wall along Slate Creek. the Town. Together, the levee and ring wall projects will create a flood protection system designed to effectively protect the Town in a 100-year flood event.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will construct the concrete ring-wall in two phases. Phase 1, which begins today, will include the construction of 600 linear feet of concrete wall which is 7-8 feet in height. Additionally, one roller gate closure will be constructed at Walnut Street, and one storm-water pump station will be added on the corner of Maple Street behind the Post Office. Phase 2, which is scheduled to begin after completion of Phase I in the Summer of 2008, will add 200 linear feet of concrete flood wall, a gate closure at Main Street, and will connect with the VDOT highway embankment levee.

The cost of the ring-wall construction which begins today is approximately $5.6 million, all of which will be financed through a federal appropriation which Congress provided last year at my request.

I would like to take the opportunity of these remarks to note that this project is one of the largest public works project undertakings in the history of Southwest Virginia. The United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Town of Grundy have forged a unique partnership for the purpose of creating new economic life for the Town of Grundy and Buchanan County.

This partnership has literally moved a mountain. When commercial construction begins in June, large new businesses will be constructed on the redevelopment site and investments in existing businesses will be feasible within the existing town. The flood protection wall and highway embankment for which we break ground today will assure business owners of safety from future flooding, and they will be able to improve their existing structures and expand their business opportunities.

As we break ground today on the new highway and the flood protection ring-wall, the infrastructure necessary for businesses to locate on the redevelopment site is being put into place. The Corps of Engineers has constructed public water lines on the redevelopment site, which extend along the rear portion of the site between the two access bridges. Those water lines will connect with the existing water lines that serve the Town of Grundy as well as the public water and wastewater system which is being constructed by the Town for the redevelopment site and will be completed in June.

The public water and wastewater system for the redevelopment site includes the installation of 4200 feet of water lines, 4100 feet of sewer lines, and 36 storm drains. In addition, the Town is installing 9600 feet of fiber optic conduit. The conduit will later be used by the Town to hold fiber optic lines, which will deploy high speed Internet access and other broadband services throughout the new downtown area.

As this report readily suggests, the Grundy Flood Control and Redevelopment project is moving rapidly forward, and completion is within site. Each year the United States Congress has honored my requests for the funding needed for the project, including $8.8 million which has been appropriated to sustain the work of the Corps of Engineers for the current year. This most recent award brings to $84.8 million the total federal investment in the Grundy project to date. This year, I am asking Congress to appropriate the funding needed to keep the project on track for next year as well..

I want to commend each of the three partners who have made the Grundy Flood Control and Redevelopment Project a success. The Army Corps of Engineers has performed excellent work in Grundy, and I want to acknowledge the outstanding leadership for the project which has been provided by the Huntington District Office of the Corps of Engineers, including its commanding officer, Colonel William Bulen, and Acting Deputy Commander Major Matthew Orenstein. I would like to thank the outstanding Corps staff for the fine work they are performing on behalf of the Town of Grundy and Buchanan County.

I also want to recognize the excellent staff of the Virginia Department of Transportation and Jim Bowie and James Keen, our local representatives on the Commonwealth Transportation Board, for their efforts to sustain this partnership and to develop the Route 460 improvement project.

I also want to express my appreciation to former Delegate Jackie Stump, Delegate Dan Bowling, and State Senator Puckett for the outstanding support they have all provided to the project. Sustaining the project has involved many funding and scheduling challenges involving the Virginia Department of Transportation. These representatives have been highly effective in assuring that state funding has continued to flow to the Route 460 project and that VDOT has kept its work parallel with that of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Mayor Roger Powers, Ed Bunn, Chairman of the Grundy Industrial Development Authority, and Chuck Crabtree, Grundy Town Manager, have also provided exemplary leadership in carrying forward the town's responsibilities.

Appropriately, the Grundy Flood Control and Redevelopment Project has received tremendous publicity in national publications and on national network television. It represents the kind of innovation which can be a model for future flood control efforts in which the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers participates. As residents of Southwest Virginia, we are all honored by the outstanding national publicity which the project has attracted. This favorable comment is a tribute to the work of all involved, and this morning I want to congratulate the people who have worked so hard in order to make this project a success.